CG 8303 A – DR: Church History (Patristics)

University of St. Thomas School of Theology at St. Mary’s Seminary

Spring 2016 – Wednesdays 7:00-9:45p

Course Description.

An introduction to the life and writings of the Fathers of the Church, with the goal of laying a basic and practical foundation for teaching the Fathers in Christian catechesis, using the patristic readings in The Liturgy of the Hours as the principal texts.

Instructor.

Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson, D.Phil., Carl and Lois Davis Professor in Patristic Studies.
E-Mail: steensj@stthom.edu Hours by appointment.

Schedule. {CHECK READINGS}

Jan. 20 The Place of the Fathers in the Life of the Catholic Church (Aquillna, pp.17-54). Note: we meet at St. Michael’s Catholic Church in conjunction with its RCIA class.


Feb. 3 Apologists: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons (Aquillna, pp. 81-107).


Feb. 24 The Council of Nicaea (Reading: Dorothy Sayers on Nicaea – posted on Blackboard).

Mar. 2 Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers (Aquillna, pp. 147-158).


Mar. 23 Spring Break. No Class. Relax!


Apr. 6 Ambrose of Milan, Augustine’s Conversion (Aquillna, pp. 193-204).

Apr. 13 Augustine of Hippo (Aquillna, pp. 245-257).
Apr. 20 Cyril of Alexandria and Leo the Great (Aquilina, pp. 226-233; 268-273).

Apr. 27 The Later Latin Fathers: Jerome of Bethlehem, Benedict of Nursia, Gregory the Great (Aquilina, pp. 234-242; 258-267; 283-293).

May 4 The Last Father: John of Damascus (Aquilina, pp. 293-312). Final Exam.

Assessment.

½ Choose one of the church fathers and prepare a brief (10-min.) teaching on his significance for Christian faith and practice. Be sure to incorporate at least one of the associated readings from the Liturgy of the Hours. You should seek to introduce this father in a compelling and substantive way to your intended audience, a parish-based faith formation group. Beginning Feb. 10, we will do two presentations per session. Sign up for a time most convenient for you.

½ A final exam will be administered during the second half of the May 4 class. The exam will include both multiple choice and short answer questions. We will work together on a study guide to assist in your exam preparations!

Required Texts.

Mike Aquilina, *The Fathers of the Church*, 3rd edition (Huntingdon, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013) (ISBN: 978-1612785615). This is a very basic introduction, especially suitable for teaching the Fathers in a parochial setting (a goal of this course), and might likely be the textbook you would use. Other readings will occasionally be posted on Blackboard.

Recommended Reading.


Milton Walsh, *Witness of the Saints: Patristic Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012), is a useful introduction to the readings that many of us pray in the Office of Readings, organized according to the Universal Catechism.


There is an overwhelming amount of material available on the Internet, but it needs to be used prudently. An excellent place to begin (and probably the most reliable) is the resources page on the website of the North American Patristics Society: http://patristics.org/resources. The 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia found at newadvent.org remains an indispensable resource. The Holy See’s Congregation for the Clergy has an outstanding website dealing with the Fathers’ contributions to the interpretation of the Sacred Text that is highly recommended: clerus.org/bibliaclerus.